



PRESS STATEMENT

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European Border Agency must become a success EuroCOP President Heinz Kiefer calls for quick progress

Ahead of next weeks first meeting of the administrative board of the European Border Agency, Heinz KIEFER, President of the European Confederation of Police, calls upon EU Member States to create the conditions needed for the agency to work efficiently.

What the agency will need first of all will be a clear description of its tasks in the near future, says Mr. KIEFER, who is worried by the emerging discussion on whether the EU needs a common Border Police or not.

While the responsible ministers of the G5, including Germany, the UK France, Italy and Spain, declared their generally positive attitude towards the idea following their meeting on 12 May in Paris, the host nation of the Border Agency, Poland has expressed itself firmly against the idea now.

This question however should not be at the centre of discussions right now, argues KIEFER. 'What the Border Agency has to assure as soon as possible is that checks at the EU's borders are performed based on a uniform standard.' In this context KIEFER points towards the EU Code on Border Controls that will be discussed in the European Parliament in the beginning of June. If adopted, the code will replace the so called 'Schengen Handbook' which is ultimately not binding upon Member States. With the Border Agency the EU has for the first time a chance of obtaining a rather independent agency that will oversee whether they stick to their commitments.

Long term secure financial resources will be a precondition for the agency to perform these and other tasks efficiently. Given the wide spread wish among Member States to freeze the EU's general budget, it remains questionable whether the 281 Million Euro envisaged for the Agency by the Commission in the Financial Perspective for 2007-13 will actually be available. How much money the Border Agency will actually need depends heavily on its concrete tasks, says Mr. KIEFER. 'The discussion about an EU Border Police is not helpful in this context.'

Equally important for the agency's functioning will be that Member States agree as soon as possible on a director for it. Only days before the meeting there are still several candidates under discussion. 'We do hope that the European Border Agency will be spared from the ordeal that Europol only recently went through when Member States were unable to agree on a new director for eight months. Citizens have a right to clear decisions that improve their security,' says Kiefer, 'endless discussions about who should get a job and plans for the far future are definitely not what citizens expect from the EU.'

The European Confederation of Police, EuroCOP is the umbrella organisation of 27 national Police Unions and Staff Organisations from 19 European States. It represents the interest of over 600.000 police officers in Europe. www.eurocop-police.org